

Smith-Morton Row House
3034 P Street, N.W.
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-185

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

SMITH-MORTON ROW HOUSE

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Location: 3034 P Street, N.W., (Georgetown), Washington, D.C. is located on the south side of P Street (formerly West) midway between 30th and 31st Streets. The house is the westernmost of a row.

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Donald Edgar

Present Occupant: Same

Present Use: Private Residence

Statement of Significance: 3034 P Street is a good example of a brick federal row house. It is well preserved; the interior is largely intact and the original kitchen outbuilding is still extant.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located in Square 1257, lot 824 (formerly Square 87, lots 197 and 198). The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property. The references are to the Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C.

At the time of the cession of the District, lots 197 and 198 appear to be owned by Thomas Beall of Georgetown.

1797 Deed April 24, 1797, recorded June 9, 1797 in
Liber C folio 55
Thomas Beall et ux Nancy
To
Samuel Davidson

1806 Will of Samuel Davidson, December 9, 1806, recorded
November 13, 1810
Will Book 1 folio 178

"residue of Estate to nephew Lewis Grant provided he shall by lawful authority assume forever after the surname of Davidson."

1811 Act of Congress, February 6, 1811
Statutes at Large 6-97
Changes the name of Lewis Grant to Lewis Grant Davidson.

- 1814 Lease April 12, 1814, recorded May 16, 1814 in
Liber AG folio 398
E. 20' of lot 197 and W. 20' of 198
Thomas B. Beall
Elisha Lanham
Lease for 99 years at yearly rent of \$40.00
- 1816 Deed August 21, 1816, recorded September 13, 1816 in
Liber AM folio 158
Thomas B. Beall
To
Elisha Lanham
- Deed August 31, 1816 recorded December 26, 1816 in
Liber AM folio 474
Elisha Lanham
To
James Belt
E. 18'6" of 197 and W. 5' of 198
At this time the land is appropriated to form the
alley.
- 1817 Deed April 7, recorded April 7, 1817 in
Liber AN folio 273
Elisha Lanham
To
Anthony Smith
East 15' of lot 198 adjoining the west 5' conveyed
to James Belt
Consideration: \$180.50
- 1820 Deed March 24, 1820, recorded April 1, 1820 in
Liber AY folio 17
Anthony Smith
To
James Belt
5'9" of lot 198
Consideration: \$172.50
- 1823 Deed January 23, 1823, recorded April 17, 1823 in
Liber WB 5 folio 274
James Belt
To
John Pickerell

"2' from the north east corner of the brick dwelling house at present belonging to William Waters and running Easterly 28' with the line of West Street."

Deed May 13, 1823, recorded June 11, 1823 in
Liber WB 10 folio 64
John Pickerell

To
James Kincaid
Consideration: \$2075

1827 Deed November 10, 1827, recorded December 14, 1827 in
Liber WB 20 folio 104

John Kincaid and George Kincaid
To
William Mackey

A description from a Quit Claim Deed of the same date and located in Liber WB 20 folio 107 is as follows: "...whereas the said James Belt by his other deed dated 1-23-23 conveyed onto John Pickerell and his heirs land as in WB 5 folio 327. Whereupon a three story brick dwelling house has been erected..."

Consideration: \$2600

1839 Death of William Mackey. He leaves as heirs Ann I. Cruikshank, Alexander Mackey, Sarah C. Mackey, and Mary Seawell, his children, and John W. Seawell and James M. Seawell, the children of Martha M. Seawell, his daughter who died in his lifetime.

1840 Chancery Cause 158, Rules 14, October 15, 1840.

Richard Cruikshank
Ann I. Cruikshank
Alexander Mackey
Sarah C. Mackey

vs.
John W. Seawell
James M. Seawell
Francis T. Seawell
Mary E. Seawell

John W. and James M. Seawell were infants at the time and assigned guardianship. On December 20, 1841 Mary E. Seawell was found by the jury to be a lunatic. John Marbury was declared to be qualified to be the holder of the property on January 11, 1842.

1844 Deed November 8, 1844, recorded March 3, 1858 in
Liber JAS 151 folio 53
John Marbury, Trustee

To

William Morton

"the three story dwelling house beginning 2' from
the n.e. corner of the brick house belonging to
William Waters on 10-10-27 being the easternmost
of the two houses and running easterly with the
line of West St. 28'."

1920 Deed May 28, 1920, recorded June 7, 1920 in
Liber 4381 folio 79

Alice E. Morton

To

Martha Breen

Also in her will, Alice Morton devises the premises
of 3034 P Street to "her faithful nurse, Martha
Breen."

1929 Deed December 1, 1929, recorded December 2, 1929 in
Liber 5354 folio 175

Martha D. Breen

To

Eudora Clover

1934 Deed August 3, 1934, recorded August 8, 1934 in
Liber 6817 folio 3

Eudora M. Clover

To

Franklin Roudybush

1959 Deed April 3, 1959, recorded April 15, 1959 in
Liber 11222 folio 163

Franklin Roudybush

To

Donald D. Edgar and Janet C. Edgar

2. Date of erection: 1818-19. The Georgetown Assessments
(National Archives, Microcopy 605, group 351, roll 11)
show an assessment of \$4,000 for each of the three story
brick houses comprising the row.

3. Architect: Unknown

4. Original plans, construction, etc: None known
5. Alterations and additions: Few significant structural alterations have been made. A central hot air heating system was installed with the ducts imbedded in the walls. In 1959 the passageway to the outbuilding was enclosed, the original kitchen was converted to a dining room and the present kitchen was added. The basement was further excavated and a concrete floor added in the middle of the 20th century.
6. Important old views: None known

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. Washington city directories provide the following list of tenants:

1834	Francis T. Seawell, Clerk Branch Bank, West Street, North side
1855	James A. Magruder, Commer., 117 Water, dw. 117 West
1865	Isabella Morton
1886-1921	Miss Alice Morton
1922-25	Martha Breen
1926-32	Angus Crawford
1933-39	Roudybush Foreign Service School
1940-41	Washington College of Foreign Service Roudybush Foreign Service School
1942-43	Roudybush Foreign Service School
1948	Sarah Pare
1954	Vacant
1960	Donald Edgar

2. Angus Crawford, the occupant of the house from 1926-1932, ran a school to prepare candidates for the foreign service exam. Franklin Roudybush, a student of Crawford's, took over the school after Crawford's death and changed the name to the Roudybush Foreign Service School. The house was not basically changed to accommodate the school. The second and third floor rooms were used for lectures. About 30 students attended sessions of three months to prepare for the written exam, and an additional one month for the orals. After the State Department converted to standardized exams, the school was no longer necessary.

Roudybush then converted the third floor into two apartments, the second floor into a single apartment, and he himself lived in the area over the present dining room. He built a shed onto the dining room which housed a bath and kitchen. The shed was removed by the Edgars when they remodelled the original kitchen area.

Prepared by Ellen J. Schwartz
Architectural Historian
The Commission of Fine Arts
September, 1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: 3034 P Street is a well preserved example of an unpretentious merchant class row house of the turn of the 19th century. Both interiors and exterior depend for their effect not upon a series of ornamental features, but rather upon simple forms and detailed items informed by studied proportion. On the entry facade the only focus is the semicircular headed fan light over the entry door reflecting the use of arched openings on the main floor interiors. These rather austere interiors are enlivened mainly by the wood mantelpieces which are present at the east wall of each major room. They are modulated slightly in both size and detail to lend that variety within a basic consistency that marks the entire design.
2. Condition of fabric: Both the interior and the exterior are in good-excellent condition. The home is quite well preserved and generally free from extensive later intrusions, renovations or subtractions.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 3034 P Street faces north onto P Street between 30th and 31st Streets with the east party wall approximately 355' along P Street from the centerline of 30th Street. The three bay three story brick main block has a facade 22' wide and a depth of 40'.

2. Foundations: The brick bearing wall is carried down as a foundation and is exposed 1' 6" below the first floor at the north elevation and 2' 6" at the south elevation.
3. Wall construction: At the south and west elevations the brickwork is of common bond with header rows every 6 courses, while at the front (north) elevation the brick is in Flemish bond with fine beaded joints.
4. Framing: Roof framing is visible and consists of 3" x 6" wood rafters which are probably 19th century and 2" x 10" tie boards which are probably later additions. Other framing of the house is not visible.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: At the east side of the south elevation a wood framed enclosed link gives access at 1 1/2' below the first floor level to the kitchen out building to the south.

At the south elevation at the center bay an areaway gives access to the basement via a pair of 6 sight center closing doors. There are however, no stairs down to these doors at present.

6. Chimneys: The two chimneys for the house are located at the east party wall at approximately the first and third quarter points of the wall. They are each 3' x 4' 8" and have a truncated pyramidal upper portion created by several inward corbelling brick courses.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entry door at the west end of the north facade is an approximate 4' wide semicircular headed opening. The head is bridged without the use of facing voussoirs by corbelling out the courses and sawing the edge of each end brick to conform to the semicircle. The threshold and a large 5' 6" entry step and platform are of gray-brown sandstone. The door itself is a heavy wood six panel type with a five light fan transom above. The jambs of the doorway are treated with a series of vertical wood panels painted white.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Upper floor windows are 6/3 light double-hung sash while the first and second floors have 6/6 light double-hung units. At the

north elevation there are in addition two basement windows each with a small areaway. The masonry window openings are bridged without the aid of an exposed brick lintel simply by running the brick courses directly over the window head. Window sills are of white painted wood.

At the north elevation some of the 19th century pintel hardware and shutter stops remain in place, but the present shutters are of aluminum and are nailed to the facade.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The simple gabled roof with ridge running east-west is slate covered.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The north elevation cornice is a simple brick outward corbel band. Gutters and downspouts are of metal.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers, ect.: None.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The simple row house plan contains a full depth west side hall and one major and front and rear room on each floor. The first floor has a front (north) parlor or living room connected by a large wooden trimmed and panelled archway about 9' wide to a south dining room (currently another living room). The stair hall is also divided by two archways into three segments; a vestibule, a central hall and a south stairway.

Second and third floor plans include a front and rear room at each level and each has a bathroom added at the northwest corner.

The house has a full basement used as a storage area.

- 2. Stairways: The simple half-turn 2' 10" wide stairway is located at the southwest corner of the house. It ascends 12 risers from north to south to a 3' platform and back south to north 7 risers to the second floor. The run

to the third floor (of one less riser) has 10 up to the landing and 8 coming back. The fruitwood railing curves upward at the end of each run and makes an angular change of direction at each landing and floor level. Other details of the stairway include wave pattern stringer appliques, rectangular balusters and turned newel posts.

A stairway to the basement makes a straight run up from north to south under the main flight. These stairs are enclosed at the first floor level by wood panelling under the east end of the run to the first floor platform.

3. Flooring: 8" to 10" wide board flooring of pine is present at the third floor level.

Until recently the present concrete basement floor was still of earth.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Both walls and ceilings are of painted plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Doors appear to be early 19th century types of simple 6 panel 3' x 6' 10" doors. The entry and the vestibule doors however are 3' 6" x 7' 4" six panel wood doors. As in the case of the entry doorway the vestibule doorway has a semicircular 5 light fan transom above.
6. Decorative features and trim: Other than the three simply trimmed wood arches of the first floor there are no significant 19th century special features of decoration. General interior trim varies in size and form throughout the house yet is of 19th century stock. Door and window trim on the second and third floors is 1 3/4" wide wood molded trim with mitered corners and without doorway plinth blocks. On the first floor however, window and door trim is 5 1/2" wide with a 2" raised molded edge with mitered corners and with doorways having 6" high plinth blocks.

Molded top edge baseboards are all similar in design but are 6 1/2" in height at the first and second floors and 6" at the third level.

There is no 19th century chair rail or wainscot in the house. The chair rail and picture molding in the entry hall is a 20th century addition.

A final trim of apparently 19th century date is a cornice ceiling molding with dentil band in the first floor vestibule.

7. Notable hardware: There are several pieces of 19th century hardware present in the house. At the third level there are two 5" x 8" door lock boxes with large keyhole, lock, brass knob, and slide bolt. At the second floor there are similar 19th century lock boxes and at the first floor entry and vestibule doors there are similar 5" x 10" lock boxes.
8. Lighting: There appears to be nothing that is original to the 19th century state of the house.
9. Heating: The mantelpieces, one for each of the six fireplaces, indicate the slight variances in form and size that help give to each floor and each room a slightly individual note. At the third floor south bedroom the 5' 3" x 4' 9" high mantel with 7" wide mantel shelf has three under shelf cut-out decorative blocks. The central motif is a horizontal rectangle with a semicircular projection from each end. The mantel shelf is visually supported by reeded pilasters which frame the fireplace.

At the north bedroom of the third floor the mantelpiece is 1" narrower but 2" taller than its neighbor at the south and has a 6" mantel shelf. The undermantel area has a central block containing a cut-out in the shape of a rectangle which has had the corners filled by quadrants of a circle. The end blocks under the mantel shelf have the same cut-out pattern at a smaller scale and are set in a vertical rather than a horizontal position. The fireplace is enframed and the mantel shelf visually supported by 2 wood pilasters each having a three-step indented full height vertical panel.

The second floor wood mantelpieces are 5' 3" x 4' 10" at the south and 5' 6" x 5' 3" at the north. Both have mantel shelves which have a projecting section at the ends of the front edge reflecting the pilasters and entablature directly below. The body of the south mantel shelf is 9" wide while its companion to the north is 10". The shelf is visually supported by two flat pilasters

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with 4 vertical slots in the case of the south mantel and with reeded half-columns in the case of the north mantelpiece. In both cases there are pseudo-entablatures over these verticals formed by several layers of moldings under the mantel shelf. Both mantelpieces have the same patterns for their under shelf block. The larger central cut-out consists of a horizontal rectangle with a semicircular projection from each end. The smaller end feature blocks have a vertical rectangle cut-out with a semicircular projection at the top and each bottom corner filled by a quadrant of a circle.

The first floor south parlor mantelpiece is very similar in detail to those at the second level except that it is 5' 7" x 5' 1" high with a 10" mantel shelf and has two one-eighth reeded columns as in inset in the two pilasters that frame the fireplace.

The front (north) parlor on the first floor has the largest mantelpiece at 5' x 5' 2" with an 11" shelf. The under shelf area is of five bays as in the other mantelpieces with the central cut-out block taking the form of a horizontal rectangle with a semicircular projection at each end. The two end blocks have cut-out patterns consisting of a pair of vertical rectangles with semicircular top projections above a regular pattern of triangular cut-outs.

Modern heating is central hot air with wall ducts to every room.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: 3034 P Street is the western most of a group of three Federal row houses and at the west is separated by a passage from a group of 20th century 3 story brick row facades.
2. Enclosures: The rear yard to the south of the main block is enclosed by a 6' high brick wall at the west and the south and by a 5' wood vertical board fence at the west.

3. Outbuildings: To the south of the main house is a two story brick gabled roof building shared by 3032 and 3034 and split into two halves by a north-south party wall under the ridge. That portion at the rear of 3034 is connected to the main house by a short 20th century wood framed passage about 2' in elevation below the first floor level. It is probably that the first floor of the outbuilding was the kitchen in the 19th century as there is a large fireplace opening 5' 1" x 3' 5" at the chimney at the southeast corner of the building. The second floor is reached by a 20th century "L" shaped stair at the northwest ascending from west to east along the north wall. The structure is of brick laid in common bond with header courses every 6 rows. There are no exposed brick arches as lintels but simply a course of bricks running across the top of the window frame. Windows themselves are simple 6/3 lights double-hung sash as seen at the second level.
4. Walks: At the west side of the house there is a 4' 6" passage from the rear yard to the street. A large wooden gate located at the facade appears to have had a 19th century predecessor as indicated by two large pintels let into the wall and a 4' 6" x 8' x 2" deep recess in the west wall at that point.
5. Landscaping: At the south of the outbuilding along the east property line is a grape arbor shading a flagstone patio. The yard itself is surrounded by a shrub border garden along the brick walls and wooden fence.

At the north elevation by the curb (at approximately the center of the facade) is a small maple tree, about 12' high.

Prepared by William P. Thompson
Architect
Commission of Fine Arts
August, 1968